

A STATE SPECIAL SCHOOL
FOR THE BLIND.

E. C. Copeland.

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A State Special School for The Blind

◀ By E. C. COPELAND

THE State Blind Shop in San Diego is a unit of the Department of Institutions and operates under the direct supervision of the state director of California institutions. This shop was brought into being by a special act of the 1937 Legislature to fill an urgent need of teaching worthy blind men and women the art of handicrafts that they might convert this knowledge into actual employment and become self-respecting citizens, as wage earners assuming their rightful place in our economic structure.

With passage of this act, the dream of the San Diego Braille Club to secure for the blind of this area special teachings—instruction and employment for those not otherwise qualified—became a reality. And to that end the Club had been ably assisted by members of the State Legislature, many service clubs, and individuals interested in the welfare of the blind, all of whom held the belief that education and employment furnish the sensible solution to this peculiar problem rather than pensions, idleness, and discard into the background of our economic structure and social life.

This shop and its teachings are not to be confused with the School for the Blind at Berkeley. At that institution blind children are taught very much the same through the first twelve grades as our sighted children. The problem of our own shop is the teaching of grown men and women, most of whom have at some time in life enjoyed vision, to adjust themselves to work exclusively with their hands in manufacturing articles that are sold so that the worker may in some measure earn while learning. The sight of those blind workers is

◀ Another one of California's "special" schools is the State Blind Shop in San Diego. This is not the only state school for the blind, but it has been selected for description in this symposium since it is the only one which works exclusively with adults. Although the institution is called a "shop" rather than a "school," and despite the fact that there is little "book learning" conducted therein, the Blind Shop can be considered as a part of the secondary school system of the state. Its purpose is to train and educate the blind "in the art of handicrafts that they might convert this knowledge into active employment and become self-respecting citizens." The State Blind Shop now is giving training to sixteen shop workers and forty-five home workers. Since May, 1938, sales of products from the Shop have increased over 300 per cent.

Mr. Copeland, who writes the article, is manager of the Shop. As such, he has duties similar to those of the superintendent of a manufacturing or commercial concern. The actual teaching is entrusted to specially trained instructors and field workers for the blind. Mr. Copeland has had wide business experience, holding various important positions with the General Motors Corporation. He has been manager of the Shop since May, 1938. He says that "he is very devoted to his work of helping the blind to help themselves."

entirely within their sense of feel, and through this sense are they taught the various crafts of hand workmanship. As there is no royal road to learning,

here indeed do these particular people emphasize this fact through long and painful hours of mastering skill with their fingers to a point of machine-like uniformity in their work.

ANY blind man or woman who has lived in the state a year prior to application may be admitted to these blind shops for training and employment, their health and physical condition, of course, permitting. Upon admission they are taught the very simple arts of handicrafts so that they may learn precision in the less difficult tasks and gain self-confidence before being placed upon operations requiring the most skilled touch and patience. An example of this is the making of basket bottoms of reed and weaving of these baskets in their entirety. Thereby the learner acquires a sense of precision, touch, and uniformity to be used in the more intricate tasks which will be assigned him later on.

The worker is, of course, encouraged to specialize along the lines of endeavor to which he and the shop instructors feel that he is best fitted. Since this instruction results in actual production of a commercial article, and since the workers are paid entirely on a piecework basis, it is of extreme financial importance to the individual to become proficient along certain channels. It would naturally follow that the more efficient a worker and the more difficult tasks he can assume and master the more income he will enjoy.

There is a variance in skill, patience, aptitude, and eagerness to learn among blind workmen as well as among sighted ones. One of the greatest problems of the instructors is to prevent speed at the expense of quality workmanship among the workers, especially the beginners. Should they in their haste along the course of their work deviate into other than the regular, prescribed channels for that article, they must painfully re-

trace their steps to the strict standard of uniformity. These workmen have the most observing and discerning of all critics, the Public. What a wonderful feeling of satisfaction it is for these student workmen to hear the results of their efforts being praised and admired, and how they are thus stimulated to further and greater efforts of accomplishment.

THE field workers for the blind travel to the areas too far removed from transportation facilities or to homes where age or infirmities prevent the blind from reaching the shop. In their own homes the blind are taught crocheting, knitting, paper favor making, tennis racket restringing, basket weaving, door mat making, furniture repair, hand and machine sewing, hooked rug making, hand loom weaving, and leather work such as the making of billfolds, purses, and belts. The field worker carries with her the necessary materials for making various articles and patiently teaches the blind student workman in the art of various handicrafts, the finished product being placed in the blind shop for sale with the proceeds reverting to the home worker. These home workers are also taught to read the Braille print, this enabling them to keep abreast of the times since several of our best magazines are also printed in Braille type for use by the blind. Others, who cannot utilize the sense of touch in reading, must rely on the talking book. Within the shop itself are produced a number of articles that one not familiar with the crafts would think incredible for blind workmen to have been the sole makers thereof. In the shop workroom, chair caning is taught and such articles are produced as gifts, bassinets, shopping and auto baskets, carts, fernery baskets, baby cribs, hampers, hand-woven rugs, sewing cabinets, door mats, linen articles such as handkerchiefs, towels, spreads,

leather work, brooms, floor brushes, wet mops, whisk brooms, dusters, mattresses, and uniforms. Quite an amount of the work performed in the blind shops is in response to special orders from customers who wish a certain idea worked out. Then indeed is the skill of the workman tested, but he has for his ally the instructor who is ever alert to teach new ways and means of overcoming difficulties.

Many people express surprise and wonderment that the blind are able to get to and from the shop, through traffic, crowds, and different streets. After all, the chief qualities needed by the blind to carry them through the streets are aggressiveness and self-confidence, the same qualities they must have when endeavoring to learn a new handcraft. Generally speaking, their self-confi-

dence is amazing—would that more people in America were imbued with it.

ONE of our young men at the shop is a graduate from the Texas School for the Blind, has been blind all his life, and is continually looking forward and onward with gratitude for the blessings he has rather than feeling bitter for those denied him. Actually this young man has never seen a piano, but he does all the piano tuning for the shop and is a good musician also.

Nothing is impossible but that thinking makes it so. And to visit the blind shops in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Oakland and see workers being trained through their hands to produce the finest in workmanship brings out the thought that everything is possible to him who has the will and confidence to do.

"Youth and the World's Work": A Review

A book (*Youth and the World's Work*, by James H. Bedford, Society for Occupational Research, Ltd., Los Angeles, 1938, 140 pages) which has for its purpose "to present the facts concerning youth, his vocational interests, attitudes, and abilities, in comparison with the opportunities in the modern vocational world" has just come to the attention of the reviewer.

The book first presents the results of a questionnaire study of vocational choice and related topics conducted among California secondary school students, and then it attempts to explain the findings and suggest ways of meeting the vocational problems of American youth. In the report of his study, the author lists the vocational choices of 1,211 high school students in 1928 and in 1934. In addition, a sampling of one junior college is included, but with no attempt to present earlier findings for comparison. Various factors influencing the vocational choices are also given.

Particularly interesting are the comparisons made between actual opportunities, based on the 1930 census, and vocational choice. Factors contributing, in the author's opinion, to the vocational maladjustment found in the study are discussed in the closing chapters. The latter portion of the book also contains some definite suggestions for remedying the situation.

This work should prove of value to anyone interested in the problems of youth both in schools and colleges and outside-of-school agencies. While the study, in the opinion of the reviewer, is not entirely free from weaknesses, its merits far outweigh its defects. The reader will find the conclusions and recommendations extremely stimulating whether they meet with his approval or disapproval.—
HAROLD W. LEUENBERGER, *San Francisco Junior College*.

California's School for Marine Officers

◀ By N. E. NICHOLS

THE great size, power, speed, and intricate mechanisms of modern ocean-going vessels make mandatory the training of officers who have had a very sound preliminary and advanced training in the leadership needed for their operation. This growing demand for well-qualified officers has brought about the establishment of the California Nautical School.

Unique in the state, the California Nautical School is one of four schools in the United States operating for the purpose of training merchant marine cadets to become licensed officers. The other states maintaining such schools are New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.

The school was established by state legislation in 1929, the state thus taking tardy advantage of an Act of Congress approved in 1874 empowering the secretary of the navy to furnish a vessel suitable for a training ship, with all her apparel, charts, books, and instruments of navigation, to a state upon application in writing by her governor. California's Governor Young requested that a ship of the Navy be supplied, but the Navy Department had no ship available; subsequently arrangements were made to transfer a vessel from the laid-up fleet of the United States Shipping Board to the Navy and thence to the State of California for use as a training ship. Of the vessels considered, the S.S. *Henry County* was decided upon as being the best suited for the purpose and was duly transferred and shifted from the James River to the Norfolk Navy Yard, where she was prepared for the trip to the West Coast.

◀ One of California's most unusual "special" schools is the California Nautical School. Enrolling youths of from 17 to 23, it forms a unique portion of the secondary education program of the state. The school is essentially a vocational school, for it prepares young men to become officers in the United States Merchant Marine. The School is conducted aboard the training ship U. S. S. "California State," part of the time when she is tied up at the Naval Fuel Depot on San Francisco Bay, and part of the time at sea.

Captain Nichols, who writes this article, is superintendent-commander of the Nautical School. Before his present appointment, he had had nearly forty years of service in the United States Navy. During the Philippine campaigns he was a man-of-war officer, and during the World War he was in command of a destroyer operating in the submarine areas off the British Isles and the Coast of France. He is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy.

Then, under a navy crew, she was taken to San Francisco, where the 4,500-ton-cargo vessel was altered to make of her a schoolship. With this change came a new name: U. S. S. California State; and December, 1931, saw aboard her an eager crew of cadets—eager with good cause: they had a good ship under their feet and they were going to learn how to run her.

The School is administered by a Board of Governors, four of whom are appointed by the governor of the State, and the fifth being the state superintendent of public instruction.

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